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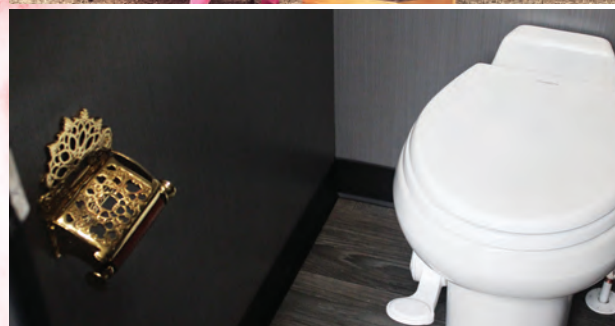


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A full-page background image of a wedding couple standing on a grassy cliff overlooking the ocean. The man is on the left, wearing a light blue shirt, a dark vest, and dark trousers. The woman is on the right, wearing a white wedding dress and holding a bouquet of orange and white flowers. They are both looking at each other and smiling. In the background, there is a rocky coastline with waves crashing against the shore, and a hillside with some houses and trees under a soft, golden light.

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Take the Help

PLANNING A WEDDING IS ... a lot. One minute you're daydreaming about saying your vows in a simple ceremony on the beach with a few friends; the next minute you're up at 2 AM desperately gluing paper flowers onto napkin rings. And speaking of that beach, do you need a permit to wed there or what?

We're here to help. Not with the paper flowers — that's on you, kid — but with the planning. Our listings have a solid roster of local businesses ready to help you with everything from getting outfitted to renting tablecloths.

Like that beach. Are you hoping for a moment under the stars or a canopy of trees? Because if you're looking to wed on public lands, there's a process you won't want to skip unless you like the idea of park rangers as wedding crashers. Alegria Sita has organized enough outdoor nuptials to know the ropes. In "A Wedding in the Redwoods," she'll take you through the red tape on the way to your something blue, ensuring you're following the rules and preserving Humboldt County's natural beauty.

You'll need to figure out the band and the bar, too. Local wedding regulars Ghost Train have some tips for you in the music department (special song requests, sound techs), including following your own quirky tastes. (Do it. I went to a wedding with a bagpiper and it was phenomenal.) As for the filling of glasses, Erin Young (who assures me that free Champagne is what your guests really want) takes you through a tasting of local bubbly from sparkling

wine to low-key cider to custom kombucha.

The photographer showcase and collection of local wedding photos should give you plenty of inspiration, both for finding someone to document the day and the endless options for style and settings. It'll likely make you less worried about the weather, too, when you peruse the lovely moments photographers shot between the raindrops. There are still more details to obsess over in "Natural Wonders," where we've collected a treasure trove of locally crafted, nature-inspired jewelry pieces to crown your look. Like actual crowns, which you owe it to yourself to at least try on.

Finally, have you straightened out the bathroom situation for your guests? Do it now. This does not mean you have to settle for something like the facilities at the last music festival you attended. In fact, you can have a swanky portable setup with chandeliers. Read all about it in Linda Stansberry's story on the Queen of Thrones — Brooke Engel's luxury lavatory business.

And remember, all those folks to whom you're sending invitations and whose dietary considerations you're agonizing over? You might be able to lean on them a little, even get them to pitch in with help or suggestions. After all, they just want to see you happy. And to drink free bubbly.

Congratulations,

— Jennifer Fumiko Cahill

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ON THE COVER

Kendra and Heinrich Soltow's wedding by the Trinity River near Willow Creek.

PHOTO BY KCCIMAGE

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FEATURE

A WEDDING IN THE Pine Woods

A full-page photograph of a bride and groom standing on a dirt path in a dense forest of tall, slender redwood trees. The bride is wearing a white dress and veil, and the groom is in a blue suit. They are looking at each other. The forest floor is covered in green ferns and moss. The trees are very tall and thin, creating a vertical rhythm in the image.

Planning a ceremony on public lands the right way

By **Alegria Sita**

Photographs

by **León Villagómez**

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when many couples begin planning one of the most memorable celebrations of their lives, they're drawn to host their nuptials among the breathtaking landscapes behind the Redwood Curtain. We are incredibly fortunate that, according to the county's website, in Humboldt some "80 percent of our land is forested, protected, or deemed recreation area."

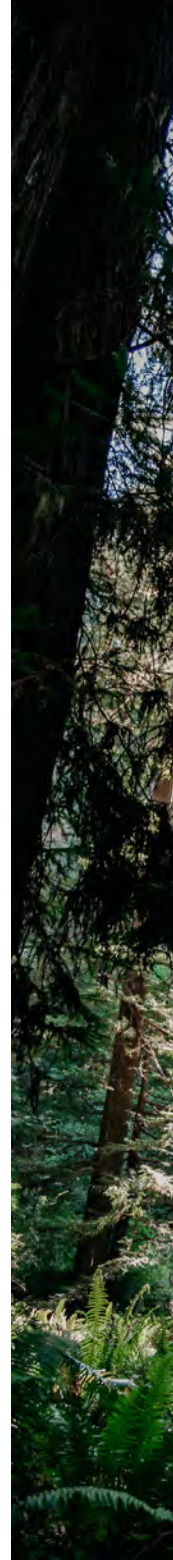
Access to these wondrous natural venues for our ceremonies and celebrations, however, is not necessarily always a walk in the park. Most are privately owned or managed by government entities that may require permits and/or fees for hosting events. Obtaining the proper permissions can be a confusing process; many couples and vendors don't quite know where to begin. Last spring, a state parks ranger admitted to me that the process can even be a moving target for park administrators, as management strategies shift with changes in funding and policy.

In the early days of my event planning business, my learning curve in navigating land use was not without a run-in with a ranger. I set out on a scouting mission with another vendor in search of the perfect ceremony location for an upcoming elopement. My colleague and I drove to one of our majestic parks, visiting grove after grove until we had drawn suspicion from a ranger we'd passed several times in our quest. At our next stop, the ranger raced in behind us to ask about our intent. When we candidly explained our scouting mission, he enlightened us about required permits and fees for events, photography and any commercial business conducted within the parks, warning us of consequences and fines in cases where permits are not secured.

I considered this encounter fortunate since it happened only on a scouting mission and not on a client's wedding day. I've since then been committed to working cooperatively and closely with our parks.

The consequences of not following proper land-use protocol extends far beyond a hitch in the proceedings and fines. Ultimately, the regulations protect and preserve our revered natural surround-

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AND OPPOSITE:
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the Giants near
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RIGHT: Pamplin
Grove. BELOW:
Prairie Creek
State Park.

Tips:

- Research your desired location and find out who manages it. (See our list of websites.) Learn as much about the location's wedding guidelines as possible (including specific areas and dates that are not permitted) and remember that rangers are busy managing our parks and are not meant to serve as wedding planners.
- Select a specific location for your event and be mindful of prohibited or restricted areas. It doesn't hurt to email the listed supervising ranger or another contact to double check the availability of the site and any associated fees.
- Complete the application in its entirety. In my experience, it's best



to answer all questions on the application. In cases where a question does not apply to your event, simply write "N/A." Again, specificity is highly encouraged. Make sure you're submitting the application within the correct window of time. In some instances, applications submitted more than six months in advance are not reviewed.

- Submit the correct fee amount with your application. Again, an email into the designated contact may be a good idea here to see if there may be additional fees for, say, ranger chaperones.
- Follow all rules and guidelines of your permit on the event day and make sure you have a copy of your permit with you.

The following are websites for some of the region's popular local parks. While we have many more state parks, they fall under the jurisdiction of those listed below:

Arcata Community Forest / Redwood Park:

cityofarcata.org/390/Venue-Rentals

Sequoia Park:

ci.eureka.ca.gov/depts/pnr/parks/default.asp

Humboldt County Parks:

humboldtgov.org/1592/County-Parks-Facilities

Humboldt Redwoods State Park:

parks.ca.gov/?page_id=425

Patrick's Point State Park:

parks.ca.gov/?page_id=417

Redwood National Park:

nps.gov/redw/planyourvisit/sup.htm

ings and our ability to enjoy them with our guests.

Be it redwoods, beaches, prairies, riverbanks, canyons or otherwise, we are drawn to hosting our celebrations in these locations because of their awe-inspiring natural beauty, but we, as humans, impact our surroundings simply by being in them. Over the last eight years, I've seen park accessibility change considerably for some of my favorite wedding and elopement locations. Some of these cherished spots now require a hired park ranger chaperone for the duration of the celebration. A number of iconic regional locations have been closed indefinitely to weddings and fewer locations are available to host larger celebrations.

In terms of the experience of your guests, foregoing proper permissions can also have negative impacts. Imagine showing up to a secluded redwood grove for a permitted elopement you've been planning from out of state for months, only to have another un-permitted couple arrive in wedding attire. Awkward. Or how about arriving to a pristine precipice overlooking our rugged Pacific coastline to stumble upon the scatterings of non-native flower petals from someone else's ceremony — not such an untouched landscape after all.

All this to say, it should be top priority for everyone to support our parks in protecting our natural wonders when accessing them for once-in-a-lifetime occasions. On the left are some helpful suggestions for planning a wedding or event in Humboldt County's parks.

If you're planning your wedding on our Redwood Coast, doing your homework thoroughly to make sure you have the proper permits ensures your event — or the one you're planning for someone else — not only creates lifetime memories among the majestic beauty that inspires you, but also preserves that beauty and its accessibility for others to enjoy for their celebrations, too. 🌲

Alegria Sita is an ordained officiant/celebrant, certified event planner and owner of Gala Events and Weddings. Contact her at www.galaeventsandweddings.com.



Photo: Muir Adams

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Toast-worthy

Local bubbles for your celebration

By Erin Young

Photographs by Amy Kumler

Styling by Lynn Leishman

IT CAN BE HARD TO FIND a place to start in planning your wedding. In my years of event planning a common question I've gotten is, "What do guests want most?" It might seem like the answer should be something in the realm of good food, good music or the joy of watching their friends' romantic dreams come true, but let me save you some time: It's the free Champagne.

It's not your friends' fault. Sparkling wine is just a magical thing. It's my general philosophy that sparkling wine is perfect for any and all occasions — celebrating the start of a new year, an anniversary, a big accomplishment, the premier of a new season of *The Bachelor* while sitting in my sweatpants on the couch — but I truly believe that weddings are sparkling wine's true calling.

Though it's true that a sparkling wine cannot be called "Champagne" unless it hails from Champagne,

“pomegranate,
gala apple
and brioche”

(\$40)





56

*strawberry,
vanilla,
raspberry
and ... apples ”*

(\$32)

France, the magic of sparkling wine can be tapped no matter its point of origin. Luckily for us, our local craft beverage makers have dabbled in this alchemy and captured the celebratory powers of bubbly

in the form of sparkling wines, ciders and even kombucha. So to help you check this item off of your planning list, here are my favorite toast-worthy local bevs.

When I started my research for this list, two stood out as obvious, classic choices: Septentrio and Moonstone Crossing.

Both wineries have brut rosés produced in a traditional method that makes for clear, beautifully blush wines with lively bubbles that are sure to fill a best man with the courage to make a tasteful speech (we can only hope, anyway). Septentrio Winery's sparkling is made from Humboldt County, estate-grown pinot noir and has flavors of pomegranate, gala apple and brioche. Moonstone Crossing's sparkling wine is made from a blend of chardonnay and pinot noir from Clement Hills and has flavors of strawberry, vanilla, raspberry and golden delicious apples. Another, more traditional option is in the works with Heart's Leap Winery, and will likely be finished and released this spring. A blanc de blanc, this is a white sparkling made from Lake County riesling and, though it will undergo some changes preceding its release, it has a touch of sweetness with flavors of pastry, golden delicious apples and pear.

But this is Humboldt. I know some of y'all are looking for some options that are less traditional. In thinking about alternative options, the first thing that came to mind was Briceland Vineyard's pét nat. Pét nats, or pétillant naturel wines, are



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naturally sparkling wines made without the step of removing the yeast which remains after fermenting in the bottle, leaving it to remain at the bottom as sediment. Ironically, pét nats, which pre-date the “traditional” sparkling wines, are making a comeback to get your bridesmaids dancing ‘til they ditch their heels. Brice-land has multiple pét nats, but my personal favorite is a rosé of merlot, gewurztraminer and Jupiter grapes and is just weird enough to be hipster, and tasty enough to fit the occasion with flavors reminiscent of an English cider.

Also bubbly and giggle-inducing, cider is just as likely to convince your dad that he’s an excellent dancer. Humboldt Cider Co. is producing approximately 1,000 different ciders (not an accurate figure, just seems like a reasonable guess) but my top choice is Friends with Benefits. The irony of the name does not escape me but this cider is delicious enough to commit to. It’s a combination of Fuji, gala, granny Smith and golden delicious apples from Placerville with the addition of Citra and Simcoe hops, making for a clean finish. My top choice from Wrangletown Cider Co. is the Fieldbrook Nursery Orchard, which has an especially craft vibe with labels on the bottles detailing the local history from which the company’s name was derived. It’s also got a uniquely delicate cider with a creamy finish and just a slight funkiness that makes it stand out from more classic toasting selections.

And finally, as an alternative to all things boozy, there is kombucha. Now listen, I was pretty darn positive I didn’t like kombucha at all. But I went and tasted it for you healthy people out there

“*rosé of merlot,
gewurztraminer
and Jupiter
grapes*”

(\$28)



and I have to admit it's delicious and I liked everything I tried. It's Alive Kombucha is a local production that has a variety of flavors, some consistently and some seasonally, and is the perfect option for non-drinking guests and to slow folks down if you're worried about a drunk, wild-card snagging the mic and saying something inappropriate. Tastings are by appointment only and if you don't like what's on offer (unlikely), or you just want to feel extra special, the brewers will help you create your own unique blend for your wedding.

As overwhelming as planning a wedding can be, the reality is that everyone is there because they love you and want to celebrate with you. And I know no better way to celebrate than with something bubbly. 🍷



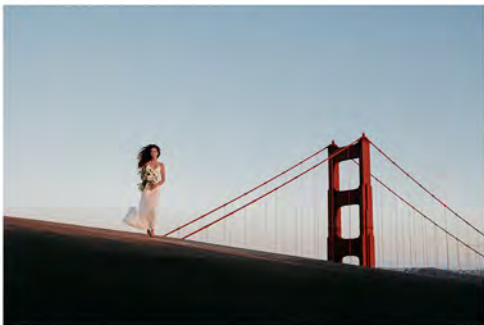
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TRAIN'S

Advice for Keeping the Party Rolling

By Jen Kelly

Photographs by Zach Lathouris

WHEN ZACHARY ZWERDLING saw The Beatles on *The Ed Sullivan Show* back in 1964, he knew what he wanted to be. All he needed was a stage, screaming girls and a guitar.

Now, sitting in his office right across from the Eureka City Hall, he keeps his guitar on display. It stands among the sym-



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bolos of his career in law, including bookshelves and antique leather chairs that require a surprisingly high level of skill to get in and out of. Though Zwerdling has practiced law for the last 43 years, he's never let his dream of being a musician slip away.

"Performing is a blast," Zwerdling says. "There's nothing like getting up in front of people that like you. It makes life sweet."

Zwerdling started off with a garage band during his time at Arcata High School. After law school, his career, family and drive to be a musician required a delicate balancing act, the elements sometimes colliding in interesting ways. "I started playing in bands here 25 years ago with an all-lawyer band," Zwerdling says. "We were called The Convictions."

Zwerdling founded his current band Ghost Train five years ago. In the time since, it has grown into a seven-piece band and taken on lead vocalist Christina D'Alessandro. "Out of the blue I took her out for coffee and said, 'I hear great things about you. Let's do a project,'" Zwerdling says. "She really brought the band to a whole higher level than we were before."

D'Alessandro never received professional training but her rich, emotional voice can pull off everything from Billie Eilish to The Rolling Stones. A real estate agent by profession, she balances a full life with her love of performing. "Ghost Train is a dream come true for me," D'Alessandro says. "I have two kids, so it competes with them, but I find the time."

The band plays at events all around Humboldt, but D'Alessandro says weddings are special. "Being at a wedding is very inspiring," D'Alessandro says. "You feel the love. Everybody is having the best time."

Few people attend as many weddings as Zwerdling and D'Alessandro, so they know what works and what doesn't — and that planning weddings is not always a joyful affair. Zwerdling recommends shopping around for

Ghost Train

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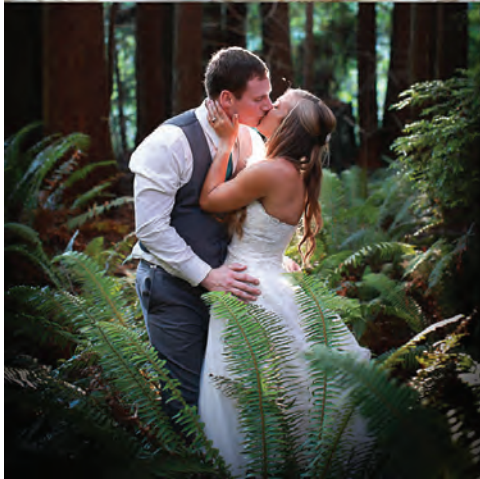


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a band. He also suggests not being afraid of something fun and unique.

"I had a mariachi band at my wedding," Zwerdling says. "There's just a huge diversity of music in this county." He notes there are local bands that play anything from hard rock to traditional Irish folk, but whatever type of band you choose, you need to book them way in advance and give them time to practice the songs you want them to learn.

D'Alessandro recommends keeping requests outside the band's usual repertoire around three to five songs. "I really do think that a band is one of the most important elements at a wedding," D'Alessandro says. "The band is good, everybody is having fun."

For that to come together, communication is key. Make sure the musicians know who the important people are, what the schedule is like and what atmosphere the band should create.

Confusion and technical problems can be mitigated during the performance by a professional audio technician. "We always hire a professional sound guy," D'Alessandro says. "Always. Every single gig."

But music isn't the only complicated piece of the wedding puzzle. Every separate piece needs to come together into one evening, which is why D'Alessandro and Zwerdling recommend bringing in a professional to oversee the planning.

"It is great if you can have a wedding planner help you out," D'Alessandro says. "It is gonna take a lot of stress off the bride. You have to think of everything from the 'save the date' to the formal invitation. There's just so many details." Then, everything arranged, you can just dance to the music. 🍷

Jen Kelly is a freelance writer based in Humboldt County.

Natural Wonders

By Jennifer Fumiko Cahill

Photos by Amy Kumler • Styling by Lynn Leishman

A TRIO OF local artisans is ready to bejewel you and your wedding party with subtle, handcrafted pieces inspired by nature.

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The bohemian vibe of Tree Myriah's intricate chains, gold-filled hoops with freshwater pearls, raw diamonds and other natural stones bring effortless beauty to a wedding look. Available at Arcata's Plaza Be Inspired, Eureka's Blue Ox Boutique and Sweet Grass Boutique in Garberville, pieces range from \$55-\$300.

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Queen of Thrones

Blinged-out bathrooms for your big day

By Linda Stansberry

Photograph by Timber and Twine Photography

THERE ARE TWO KINDS OF PEOPLE: those who love weddings and those who don't. Brooke Engel loves weddings — the planning, the little touches. For her own October 2019 wedding she handmade blankets for guests to cuddle under during the ceremony, placing them next to a sign that read, "To have and to hold in case you get cold." It was "the best day of [her] life," she says. And she wasn't going to spend any part of it scrunched in a port-a-potty holding the skirts of her wedding dress above smelly blue water. That's just not what a queen does.

Queen of Thrones was launched in July of 2019, shortly after Engel attended a bridal fair while planning her big day. Among the vendors was a luxury portable bathroom company from Oregon. The idea struck her as brilliant but when she suggested renting it for their nuptials, her husband to be — Brett Engel, owner of Mr. Rooter plumbing — said, "Why not just buy one?" Maybe someone else would want to rent it and pay

off their investment, he reasoned. Her fiancé was right. Queen of Thrones was booked almost every weekend up until the Engels' celebration and it has a packed schedule for 2020.

The Queen of Thrones logo is a blinged-out toilet seat. It adorns the trailer Engel hauls behind their truck, essentially an RV with two rooms, one labeled "Queen," the other "King." The queen's side has two stalls, the king's has two urinals. Each bathroom includes porcelain toilets and sinks, air conditioning and heating, Bluetooth stereo, wood-grained flooring, a full-length mirror, artwork and light features, including mini chandeliers. Engel describes the décor as "glam," with pink glitter-dipped soap dispensers and a sign that reads, "Always wear your invisible crown."

"It's so much fun to sit outside and hear people's reactions," says Engel. "I hear a lot of people say, 'Oh, this is better than my bathroom at home!'"

Engel, who worked in childcare, marketing and advertising before becoming an entrepreneur (she also works for her husband in the family business), enjoys refining and tweaking her enterprise. She says she learned a lot from her own wedding and uses social media to get feedback on how to make others' big days a little easier. She used one poll on Facebook to ask people what last-minute items they needed at formal events. The list, which included double-sided tape, moleskin and spray deodorant, helped her create hygiene baskets for the Royal Package, a luxury offering that includes an attendant for the restrooms and décor to match the wedding colors. All services include transport within Humboldt County from as far north as Trinidad to as far south as Rio Dell, although the business will accommodate more far-flung locales with an additional travel fee. The full-sized restrooms can accommodate parties with up to 300 guests.

Outdoor weddings, while popular in our region, are fraught with logistical challenges, es-

pecially when it comes to the necessary pre-ceremony primping and prepping. Anyone who has ever changed into heels on a beach or dragged the train of their dress through a bed of pine needles will understand. Engel is working on a new offering to address this issue: a ladies' lounge for the bridal party. The lounge will include a fridge for mimosas, mirrors, styling chairs, outlets and other necessities. Ever with the eye for details, Engel is working closely with professional stylists to make sure the lighting is just right. She will also be able to pick up the bridal party's dresses before the event and have them waiting in the trailer.

All of this keeps Engel and her family very busy, on top of the day-to-day work of running a plumbing business and helping raise Brett's 4-year-old son.

Engel, who was raised in Blue Lake but lived in the Bay Area for many years before returning to Humboldt in 2013, says she is fortunate to have had many good role models during her life, people who encouraged her to take the risk of becoming an entrepreneur. She occasionally tries to give back by donating her services, including the wedding last summer of a friend whose father had recently died.

With wedding season about to get rolling again, Engel and her team are prepared to get rolling as well, possibly investing in a new truck and tow package to bring their luxury thrones to venues across the region. Whether it's a cliff in Klamath, a field in Hydesville, a beach in Shelter Cove or a farm in Ferndale, using the bathroom on the big day no longer has to be a royal pain. 🍷

Linda Stansberry is a freelance writer in Humboldt.

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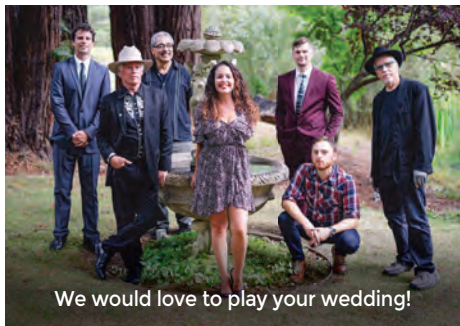
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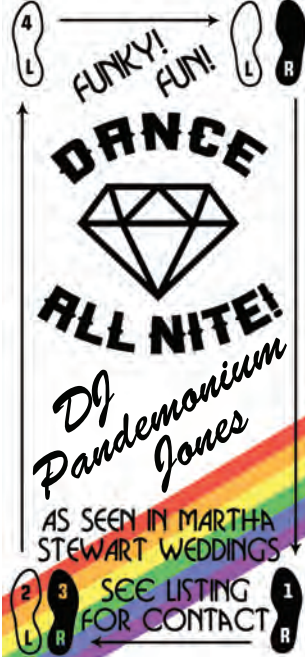



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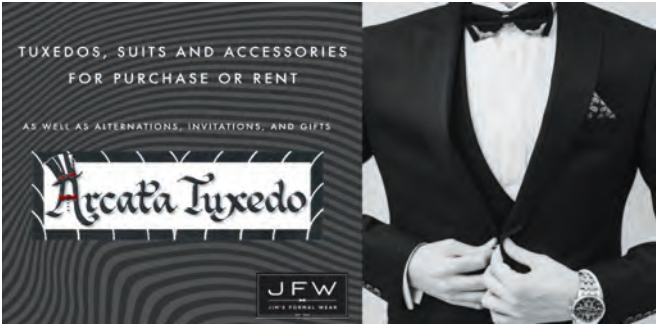
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